

NATURAL LAW AND
ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSICS

Knud Haakonssen

General Editor

NATURAL LAW AND
ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSICS

*Elements
of
Criticism*

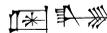
VOLUME I

Henry Home, Lord Kames

The Sixth Edition

Edited and with an Introduction by Peter Jones

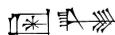
Major Works of Henry Home, Lord Kames



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ELEMENTS OF CRITICISM

The Sixth Edition	
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INTRODUCTION

Henry Home was born in 1696 in the southeastern Scottish parish of Eccles, three miles from the English border; he died in 1782, in Edinburgh. Both of his parents came from prominent families divided by Whig, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian loyalties; Jacobite sympathies were also apparent. Because of his father's accumulating debts and large family burdens, Home was educated entirely at home; and he acquired the tenacity, energy, and encyclopedic range of many self-educated people. In 1741 Home proudly inherited his seventeenth-century family house, together with mill, brewhouse, and mixed arable farm, and until 1766, when he also took over his wife's property in Perthshire, delighted in taking friends there.

Home moved to Edinburgh in 1712, and over the next ten years studied, first, to be a solicitor, and later, an advocate: during that period he joined several clubs, especially those devoted to philosophy and to music. In 1732 he failed to secure the Edinburgh Chair of Civil Law, but by the later 1730s had become an established advocate, and had also attached himself to the political faction and patronage of the second duke of Argyll. Under the patronage of the third duke, he became a Scottish lawlord in 1752, when he was appointed to the supreme civil court, the Court of Session. In 1763 he was appointed to the highest criminal court, the High Court of Justiciary. Earlier, in 1755, he had also been appointed to the main government agencies controlling the Scottish economy after the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion: the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements in Scotland and the Commission for the Forfeited Estates. By that date, Kames was involved both in extensive farming improvements to his wife's estate and in patronage of other improvement schemes and artistic activities. For five years after 1737 he was a curator of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, whose keeper, Thomas Ruddiman, helped to establish it as one

of the great collections: there, he was able to consult almost any significant ancient or modern work on law or philosophy, history or economics, architecture or rhetoric, the sciences or education.

From at least 1720 Home had taken an active interest in philosophical discussions, and in the late 1730s he planned a literary and political periodical with his distant cousin, David Hume (who was the first to change the spelling of the family name). In 1741 he became a member of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, becoming vice president in 1748 and president from 1769 until his death: through this society he made the valued friendship of Benjamin Franklin, who stayed with him and maintained a fruitful correspondence. Kames was an active founder member of the Select Society from 1755 onward and of two of its practical offshoots, the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, and the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland. Several of the discussions in the present book have their sources, or allude to recorded discussions, in these societies, the full titles of which, including their offshoots and subcommittees, varied, whether by accident or design.

Unlike Hume and Smith, Kames never lived in France, nor like a few of his richer colleagues did he undertake the Grand Tour. His information about the continent came from conversation, correspondence, and reading. Although he had a vast range of acquaintances, he was probably not a family man, as such: his self-imposed workload would have precluded it. By contemporaries he was held to have done more than anyone else in Scotland for a century to promote philosophy, *belles lettres*, and the arts.

The majority of Kames's works are concerned with the law of Scotland. During his attempts, in the early volumes, to assemble and classify court decisions by reference to the rules being applied, he became acutely aware of the historical evolution of Scots law. He was a pioneer in comparative legal history, and as his inquiries broadened to include property and rights, he was able to develop his long-standing philosophical interests. For Kames, the law is grounded in morality and human nature: on these topics he is an empiricist in the tradition of Shaftesbury and, to some extent, Hutcheson. He shared the hostility toward skepticism of Scottish common-sense philosophers such as Reid, but he drifts toward a form of determinism in which

“the benevolent hand of the Creator” [I.351] has left the universe to run on its own. As he makes clear in *Elements of Criticism*, introspection is the key to understanding the mind, and the first edition of that work (1762) stands at the midpoint of his explicitly philosophical works. Kames believed that in this sphere of inquiry, his own major work was *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), which analyzes the individual and social character of men and society, canvassing many insights adopted by later students of sociology, anthropology, social theory, and comparative history.

Cultural, Physical, and Social Context of Scotland

The cultural context of Scotland changed dramatically during Kames’s lifetime, although two major factors ensured that it lagged behind developments in England generally and those in London and Paris most prominently: economic poverty and the dominating, though declining, influence of the Calvinist church. The latter discouraged all forms of costly display, personal or public, along with any self-indulgence associated with music and theater in general and dancing in particular. The former ensured that only a very few individuals were rich enough to act as patrons in any of the arts, and influential enough to ignore ecclesiastical pressures.

Nevertheless, at varying rates and with regional differences, by the 1760s much of Britain, including Scotland, was experiencing the benefits of an increasingly rich and stable political nation. The spread of wealth and increasing leisure among the middle classes, together with a greater ease of travel; the beginning of public concerts and museums in which works would be removed from their original contexts for special attention; a decline in individual patronage and the concomitant freedom of artists to satisfy a growing luxury market; the beginning of the formal study of the arts by nonpractitioners and nonowners; the greater availability of books and illustrations as secondary sources of information; the increasing influence of critics, through journals; the institutionalization of the arts and sciences and thus of professional distinctions between them—all these factors characterized, in various degrees, the contexts in which Kames’s intended readership might attend to his views.

And in Scotland, especially, the self-conscious emphasis on education as

the key to “improvement” justified the occasional pedagogic, if not didactic, tone of the argument. That alone, together with the relative inaccessibility to most Scots of notable paintings, architecture, or music, explained both the unusual interest readers took in Kames’s discussions of those arts and also his central emphasis on topics concerning literature and language, about which they would be more familiar.

The physical, social, and intellectual context of Scotland also differed dramatically from that farther south. In 1762 fewer than one million people lived in Scotland, many at the level of bare subsistence, particularly in the Highlands where the population survived on a diet almost exclusively of oatmeal. The only large city, Edinburgh, was a derelict, medieval walled enclave of 140 acres, overcrowded with a population of around fifty-five thousand renting often unheated rooms in buildings up to fifteen stories high. Looking back to his youth, a younger colleague of Kames, Lord Cockburn, states that even in the 1770s there must have been “thousands of slaves” throughout Scotland, bought and sold like serfs of old. In spite of the Turnpike Act of 1751 there were, as yet, few roads outside Edinburgh: the coach journey to Glasgow took twelve hours, and the boat to London up to one month.

Most social life occurred, not in private apartments, but in rooms rented in the numerous local taverns; here took place not only all official commercial or legal business but also the countless discussion and drinking clubs, modeled on those that had been thriving in France and England since the later seventeenth century. In Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Glasgow particularly, but even in smaller towns such as Perth, a major emphasis in discussion societies from the mid-eighteenth century was on “improvement”—that is, on any matters which directly or indirectly might lead to the increased health and wealth of the nation. The three central topics in Edinburgh societies around the 1750s were agriculture, mining, and banking; and the intensely practical debates in the Edinburgh Philosophical Society at that date, when Kames was vice president, ranged over such issues as mining and the ventilation of mines, the chemistry of various solutions, drainage systems, the uses of oxen (Kames favored them over horses), and later, as a communication with Benjamin Franklin testifies, the problems of smoky chimneys and lightning. Such practical debates accelerated

awareness of changes in thinking about the world, for the scientific understanding of the day was extremely limited by our standards.

The first circulating library in Edinburgh opened in 1725, at the initiative of the bookseller and poet Allan Ramsay, but the few seasonal public balls and occasional plays were all condemned by a vocal minority of the clergy. The Musical Society, founded in 1728, and of which Kames was a member, became especially active after the opening of St. Cecilia's Hall in the 1760s. Music was made for and by amateurs (unaccompanied songs were widely enjoyed at family gatherings) and, like the discussion clubs, fostered participation: there were few public audiences as such, paying to enjoy passively the efforts of others. And apart from nature, about which Kames was one of the first Scottish philosophers to write appreciatively [1.127, 240], there was little visual stimulation or interest, which underlines the importance of his discussions of gardening, architecture, and painting. In 1756, for example, there were only two carpets in the whole town of Jedburgh, a Border market center a few miles from Kames's farm. At the same date, in the whole of Scotland, there were barely a dozen private collections of what today we regard as art.

The Argument of *Elements of Criticism*

Like many of his contemporaries, Kames states that he is investigating "the science of human nature" and, since "action is the aim of all our improvements," pleasure should be considered for "relaxation only" [1.305, 318, 361, 418]. The present book, therefore, addresses only one segment of our experience. Kames sets out to show that "the science of criticism"—essentially, discussion of the arts—is "a rational science," like morals: it is "a subject of reasoning as well as of taste" [1.7, 195]. Criticism is an "intermediate link" between mere corporeal pleasures and those of morality and religion, and requires more "circumspection" than the latter, where the common sense of mankind is more evident [2.499]. It is a secular practice, grounded in human nature, but one that contributes to the fulfillment of man's social nature, and thereby to the harmony and stability of society itself. The sources and nature of criticism can be explained only by reference to how the mind works, and to how and why people respond and behave

as they do; such facts about context are important, because relations between things are often as important as their inherent properties. The fine arts are intended to entertain us, and they raise emotions of pleasure in us by means of their properties: the principles they employ or implement are “founded upon the sensitive part of our nature”; that helps to explain why music, gardening, and architecture humanize and polish the mind [1.13, 53].

Kames concentrates on our responses to the arts, not on the creative act itself. Like most philosophers, Kames usually differs only in detail and emphasis from those who most influenced him. Following Locke, Kames holds that we all experience a train of ideas in the mind, related to each other by a sense of order, resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Such notions, of course, characterize Hume’s analyses of causation and of the mind’s workings, and Hume is the first silent interlocutor with whom Kames is constantly debating his ideas. The second silent partner is Adam Smith, to whom Kames was patron at the outset of his career. For example, Kames follows both Hume and Smith in assigning a central role to sympathy, without which no person could fully understand another, nor the bonds of society be secured [1.446]. He argues that whenever we turn our attention away from the immediate present, we create an “ideal presence” in our minds that enables us to be affected by any of our thoughts, “a waking dream” in which nothing at the time strikes us as inferior to daily life [1.91]. Like Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, and especially Thomas Reid, Kames resorted to several allegedly common-sense assumptions, notably inherent internal senses—such as a moral sense, a sense of beauty, and so on [e.g., 1.378]. Here, Hume and Smith differ from Kames and Reid not on the facts, but on their explanation: none denies that most people, under common conditions, behave or respond in similar ways. Whereas Hume seeks to explain the responses in terms of a context of learning, habit, tradition, and social practice, Kames appeals to natural, God-given intuitions, while also denying innate ideas [2.516]. He accepts that there are obvious changes in practice and taste [1.206] and argues that the kind of rivalry often engendered by such changes can contribute to genuine improvement. Nevertheless, it remains necessary to establish standards of criticism [2.499]. This was a recurrent topic from the end of the seventeenth century,

and was vigorously debated in Edinburgh in the 1750s. Two issues were usually debated in tandem: what are the relative roles of feeling and reasoning in matters of taste, and can there be a standard of taste?

The committee of the Edinburgh Society concerned with belles lettres and criticism announced in 1755 a prize for the “best essay on taste”: the prize was won by Alexander Gerard, of Aberdeen, and his revised essay was published in 1759. In the meantime Allan Ramsay, the painter, had published his “Dialogue on Taste” in 1755 [*The Investigator*, CCCXXII], Hume brought out his essay “Of the Standard of Taste” in 1757, and passages in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* of 1759 represent part of Smith’s response to the topic. Kames was an active speaker in the Select Society committee, and chapters 24 and 25 of *Elements of Criticism* represent his deliberations on the topic itself and on these recent publications. Many of his references to architecture and the views of thinkers such as the French architect and translator of Vitruvius, Claude Perrault (1613–88), mirror those debates [1.179, 202; 2.465]. Kames had sponsored and discussed with Smith his lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres, given for the first time in Edinburgh in 1748 and, after 1752, in Glasgow, and there are numerous parallels between the two writers in their chosen topics and references. Discussions of other topics in Kames’s text also allude to those in the Select Society and its northern equivalent, the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, known as The Wise Club [e.g., on ridicule, 1.114; on the sublime, 1.211].

Although he sharply separated himself in one respect from Hume’s account of causation [2.86], Kames accepts all of Hume’s main points about judgments of taste. Works of fine art are intentionally made by human beings but, because intentions are not visible, “it requires reflection to discover their true character” [1.37]. Accordingly, experience, learning, and comparative judgment are as essential in forming a taste as in any other social endeavor. Truly refined pleasures may be enjoyed by only a small number of people [1.111], largely because of the time, effort, and abilities needed, but almost everyone not struggling at the level of bare survival can derive some pleasure from the arts [2.499]. He agrees that the tendency of pleasant emotions is to prolong the pleasure and that the mind essentially seeks to create order out of its impressions and experiences [1.22]: at bot-

tom, as classical writers had insisted, *propriety* is the ultimate criterion of merit and our pleasurable response to it [1.338], but it can be discerned only by means of judgment or reflection [2.478].

Kames adopts a standard distinction of the day between intrinsic beauty and relative beauty, deriving from discussions in Shaftesbury [*Characteristics*, “The Moralists,” pt. III. sect. 2], Addison [*The Spectator*, no. 415], Francis Hutcheson [*An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*], David Hume’s *Treatise* [bk. II. pt. 2. sect. 5; bk. III. pt. 3. sect. 1], and Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* [pt. IV. ch. 1, 2]. The central point is that all judgments about relative beauty require “an act of understanding and reflection,” as is most obvious in “the beauty of utility” [1.197, 458]. In his own discussions of the sublime [1.211], Kames barely alludes to Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757, possibly to imply a distance from him; but he certainly knew John Baillie’s *An Essay on the Sublime*, 1747, through Alexander Gerard’s enthusiastic discussion of it in the prize essay that Kames had helped to judge. Gerard and Smith had also published their views on ridicule, to which Kames is adverting in his own discussion [1.114], although prominent French discussion in the seventeenth century had prompted the reflections of Shaftesbury, and those in *The Spectator* (by Addison in no. 249, and Steele in no. 422), which were particularly influential on current debate.

Gardening exercised the minds and purses of many prominent Scots from the 1720s onward, Kames even suggesting that, exceptionally, it may excel architecture in its impact on observers [2.430]. Sir John Clerk attracted attention by means of extensive circulation in manuscript of his poem “The Country Seat” in the late 1720s, and Sir John Dalrymple’s *Essay on Landscape Gardening* was circulating widely in Edinburgh in the 1750s among his fellow lawyers and landowners. Dalrymple took part in the Select Society’s discussions on taste, and he was a friend of Kames, Hume, Smith, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, and Robert Adam. In an emerging context of seemingly abstract or theoretical debate, where buildings and gardens might be illustrated only by geometrical plans or elevations, Kames’s practicality was widely appreciated: for example, Samuel

Bard recommended to his father in New York that he study Kames before embarking on any improvements. (Kames castigates architects who resort to “blind windows” when they cannot harmonize internal plan and external appearance: 2.458, 476.) By 1764 Dalrymple and Kames had established a dominant taste for the natural style in gardening, both admiring Kent and work at Stowe, and Daniel Paterson’s gardens of 1756 for Inveraray. Among several publications on Stowe, Kames probably knew at least William Gilpin’s *A Dialogue upon the Gardens . . . at Stow*, 1748 (published anonymously).

Scattered throughout the book are Kames’s reflections on music and the most topical debate of the day throughout Europe, concerning the relation of music to emotions and to words [1.53, 138]. Reflections on music, and probably on such books as Charles Avison’s *An Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), incline him to think of a natural language for the expression of emotions, and to view music as a unique language. He alludes to the vigorous debate about the respective merits of French and Italian opera [1.141], which much occupied Rousseau, whose essays we know Kames read. It is almost certain, in view of the proximity of their views, that he had discussed all these matters with Smith, who left unfinished a work on the imitative arts and the particular character of music. The discussions of beauty in language and of versification are partly concerned with how to speak poetry properly, that is, to harmonize “sound and sense” [2.94]: comparisons with music are inevitable. To distinguish pronunciation from singing, he notes that feet regulate pronunciation and hence melody, and feet are determined by pauses [2.108].

What kinds of reception did *Elements of Criticism* receive? Owen Ruffhead reviewed the book in volumes 26 and 27, for 1762 and 1763, of the *Monthly Review*. Eight editions within a twenty-year period testify to considerable interest for a book of this kind. Along with works on rhetoric by Hugh Blair, and later George Campbell, Kames’s work, often in one of several abridged editions, entered the syllabus of American colleges founded on a Scottish model, in which almost all students took a general course in rhetoric. It was used throughout the nineteenth century in such courses. His book also entered the libraries of self-respecting intellectuals

abroad, ranging from Franklin and Jefferson in America to Kant and Josef Haydn; it was helped, unusually, not by a French version but by a German translation issued only a year after the first edition had appeared, and itself reprinted four times before the end of the century.

Peter Jones

Selected Reading

- Fleming, John. *Robert Adam and His Circle in Edinburgh and Rome*. London: John Murray, 1962.
- Jones, Peter. "The Aesthetics of Adam Smith," in *Adam Smith Reviewed*, edited by Peter Jones and Andrew S. Skinner. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.
- . "Hume on the Arts and 'The Standard of Taste': Texts and Contexts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, edited by David Fate Norton. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Lindsay, Ian, and Mary Cosh. *Inveraray and the Dukes of Argyll*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973.
- Ross, I. S. *Lord Kames and the Scotland of His Day*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Tait, A. A. *The Landscape Garden in Scotland, 1735–1835*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Henry Home, Lord Kames, published the first edition of *Elements of Criticism* in 1762, although he began writing it at least a decade earlier. There are no substantive differences between the first and last editions, although there are many stylistic changes. Kames frequently multiplied examples and he expanded some discussions, but the central doctrines remain unchanged. The present edition reproduces the text of the sixth edition, of 1785, which was the last authorized by Kames himself and appeared shortly after his death. A few variations between the first and sixth editions have been indicated, and printer's errors have been corrected. Page breaks in the sixth edition are indicated by the use of angle brackets. For example, page 112 begins after <112>.

All of Kames's original notes are indicated by asterisks, daggers, and other symbols; where editorial notes have been added, these are contained within brackets. All other new editorial notes and references are indicated by arabic numerals.

Editorial notes have been restricted to providing the dates of people mentioned by Kames in his text, together with the titles and authors of works not fully identified by him. These details are normally given at the first occurrence of a name or work, which is itself recorded in the original index.

References

Kames rarely indicated the editions he was using. For both Shakespeare and classical Latin authors, modern references have been provided. Kames used eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare, which embodied editorial decisions by Rowe and Warburton, many of which have been rejected by later scholars. Modern act and scene divisions have been provided.

In his extensive discussion of poetry in volume 2, Kames frequently cites single lines of Latin, Italian, French, or English, without indicating their author or the work in which the quotation occurs. Although he explicitly states that “thought and expression have a great influence on expression” [2.143], many of the single lines, extracted from their contexts, are almost meaningless, and translations have not been provided. Kames is interested essentially in how lines should, or could, be properly spoken, and his discussion is about accent, rhythm, and meter.

Translations

Kames read Latin, French, and Italian fluently, and quoted texts in the original language: his comments are on works in their original language, not on any translation that may be provided. He himself particularly admired the translations of Alexander Pope and John Dryden, and these have been used where possible, together with some other translations of the time. Details are:

Ariosto, Lodovico. *Orlando Furioso* (1532). Translated by William Stewart Rose. London: J. Murray, 1823–31.

Boileau Despréaux, Nicolas. *The Works of Monsieur Boileau*. Translated by Nicholas Rowe. London: E. Sanger and E. Curll, 1712.

Catullus, Gaius Valerius. *The Poems of Catullus*. Translated by Peter Whigham. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966.

Corneille, Pierre. *The Cid, Cinna, The Theatrical Illusion*. Translation and introduction by John Cairncross. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1975.

———. *Pompey the Great, a Tragedy*. Translated out of French by certain persons of honor. London: Herringman, 1664.

Dryden, John, trans. *Works of Virgil: Containing His Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneid*. London: J. Tonson, 1697.

Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe-, *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses*. Translated by Tobias Smollett. London, 1776.

Guarini, Battista. *Il Pastor Fido*. Translated by Richard Fanshawe. London: Bently et al., 1692.

Pope, Alexander, trans. *The Iliad of Homer*. London: for Bernard Lintott, 1715–20.

- . *Imitations of Horace*. Edited by John Butt. London: Methuen, 1939.
- . *The Odyssey of Homer*. London: for Bernard Lintott, 1725–26.
- . *The Poetical Works*. Edited by A. W. Ward. London: Macmillan, 1873.
- Quintus Curtius Rufus. *The History of Alexander*. Translated by John Yardley. Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Racine, Jean. *Bajazet*. Translated by Y. M. Martin. London: George Gill, 1964.
- . *Iphigenia, Phaedra, Athaliah*. Translation and introduction by John Cairncross. Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Tasso, Torquato. *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Translated by Edward Fairfax. Published in 1600 as *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or the Recovery of Jerusalem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- . *Aminta*. Translated by E. Grillo. London: Dent, 1924.
- Vida, Marco Girolamo. *Vida's Art of Poetry*. Translated by Christopher Pitt. London: Sam. Palmer for A. Bettersworth, 1725.

The classical texts quoted by Kames differ in countless minor details from modern editions: the variations have not been noted. The following classical works are cited in translations from the Loeb Classical Library published by Heinemann, London, and Harvard University Press, various dates:

- Cicero: *De Finibus*, H. Rackham
- Cicero: *De Officiis*, Walter Miller
- Cicero: *De Oratore*, E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham
- Cicero: *Tusculan Disputations*, J. E. King
- Cicero: *Verrine Orations (Against Caecilius)*, L. H. G. Greenwood
- Horace: *Odes and Epodes*, C. E. Bennett
- Horace: *Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica*, H. R. Fairclough
- Livy: B. O. Foster, F. G. Moore, Evan T. Sage, A. C. Schlesinger, R. M. Geer
- Lucan: *The Civil War [Pharsalia]*, J. D. Duff
- Martial: *Epigrams*, D. R. Shackleton Bailey
- Ovid: *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, J. H. Mozley
- Ovid: *Heroides and Amores*, Grant Showerman
- Quintilian: *The Institutio Oratoria*, H. E. Butler
- Terence: *The Self-Tormentor, The Eunuch*, John Barsby
- Virgil: *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, The Minor Poems*, H. R. Fairclough

In a few cases I have provided my own version.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most editors exhaust their own resources in chasing down unidentified books and quotations and appropriate translations. Without the unstinting help of friends there would remain many more gaps in notes to the text than still exist, and I wish to thank most warmly William Desmond, Jean Jones, Emilio Mazza, Åsa Söderman, and Robert Wokler.

ELEMENTS OF CRITICISM

VOLUME I

ELEMENTS
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<iii>

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